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INTO THE  
E F F E C T S  
OF  
S P I R I T U O U S  
L I Q U O R S  
U P O N T H E  
H U M A N B O D Y,  
And their INFLUENCE upon the  
HAPPINESS of SOCIETY.

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# An ENQUIRY into the EFFECTS of SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS upon the HUMAN BODY, &c.

**B**Y spirits I mean all those liquors which are obtained by distillation from the fermented juices or substances of any kind. These liquors were formerly used only in medicine.—They now constitute a principal part of the drinks of many countries.

Since the introduction of spirituous liquors into such general use, physicians have remarked that a number of new diseases have appeared among us, and have described many new symptoms as common to old diseases. Spirits in their first operation are stimulating upon the system. They quicken the circulation of the blood, and produce some heat in the body. Soon afterwards, they become what is called sedative; that is, they diminish the action of the vital powers, and thereby produce languor and weakness.

The effects of spirituous liquors upon the human body in producing diseases are sometimes gradual. A strong constitution, especially if it be assisted with constant and hard labour, will counteract the destructive effects of spirits for many years, but in general they produce the following diseases:

1. A sickness at the stomach, and vomiting in the morning. This disorder is generally accompanied with a want of appetite for breakfast. It is known by tremors in the hands, insomuch that persons who labour under it are hardly able to lift a teacup to their heads 'till they have taken a dose of some cordial liquor. In this disorder, a peculiar paleness, with small red streaks, appear in the cheeks. The flesh of the face at the same time has a peculiar fulness and flabbiness which are very different from sound and healthy fat.

2. An universal dropsy. This disorder begins first in the lower limbs, and gradually extends itself throughout the whole body. I have been told that the merchants in Charleston, in South-Carolina, never trust the planters when spirits have produced the first symptom of this second disorder upon them. It is very natural to suppose, that industry and virtue have become extinct in that man whose legs and feet are swelled from the use of spirituous liquors.

3. Obstruction of the liver. This disorder produces other diseases such as an inflammation, which sometimes proves suddenly fatal---the jaundice---and a dropsy of the belly.

4. Madness. It is unnecessary to describe this disease with all its terrors and consequences. It is well known in every township where spirituous liquors are used.

5. The Palsy and 6. the Apoplexy compleat the group of diseases produced by spirituous liquors. I do not assert that these two disorders are never produced by any other causes, but I maintain that spirituous liquors are the most frequent causes of them, and that when a predisposition to them is produced by other causes, they are rendered more certain and more dangerous by the intemperate use of spirits.

I have only named a few of the principal disorders produced by spirituous liquors. It would take up a volume to describe how much other disorders natural to the human body are increased and complicated by them. Every species of inflammatory and putrid fever is rendered more frequent and more obstinate by the use of spirituous liquors.

The danger to life from the diseases which have been mentioned is well known. I do not think it extravagant therefore to repeat here what has been often said, that spirituous liquors destroy more lives than the sword. War has its intervals of destruction—but spirits operate at all times and seasons upon human life. The ravages of war are confined to but one part of the human species, viz. to men, but spirits act too often upon persons who are exempted from the dangers of war by age or sex; and lastly, war destroys only those persons who allow the use of arms to be lawful, whereas spirits insinuate their fatal effects among people whose principles are opposed to the effusion of human blood.

Let us next turn our eyes from the effects of spirits upon health and life to their effects upon *property*; and here fresh scenes of misery open to our view. Among the inhabitants of cities, they produce debts—disgrace and bankruptcy. Among farmers they produce idleness with its usual consequences, such as houses without windows—barns without roofs—gardens without

without enclosures—fields without fences—hogs without yokes—sheep without wool—meagre cattle—feeble horses—and half clad dirty children without principles, morals or manners.—This picture is not exaggerated. I appeal to the observations of every man in Pennsylvania, whether such scenes of wretchedness do not follow the tracks of spirituous liquors in every part of the state.

If we advance one step further and examine the effects of spirituous liquors upon the *moral faculty*, the prospect will be still more distressing and terrible. The first effects of spirits upon the mind shew themselves in the *temper*. I have constantly observed men who are intoxicated in any degree with spirits to be peevish and quarrelsome; after a while they lose by degrees the moral sense. They violate promises and engagements without shame or remorse. From these deficiencies in veracity and integrity, they pass on to crimes of a more heinous nature.—It would be to dishonour human nature only to name them.

Thus have I in a few words pointed out the effects of spirituous liquors upon the lives, estates and souls of my fellow-creatures.—Their mischiefs may be summed up in a few words. They fill our church yards with premature graves—they fill the Sheriff's docket with executions—they croud our jails—and lastly they people the regions—but it belongs to another profession to shew their terrible consequences in the future world.

I shall now proceed to combat some prejudices in favor of the use of spirituous liquors.

There are three occasions in which spirits have been thought to be necessary and useful.

1. In very cold weather.
2. In very warm weather. And
3. In times of hard labour.

1. There cannot be a greater error than to suppose that spirituous liquors lessen the effects of cold upon the body. On the contrary, I maintain that they always render the body more liable to be affected and injured by cold. The temporary warmth they produce is always succeeded by chilliness. If any thing besides warm cloathing and exercise is necessary to warm the body in cold weather, a plentiful meal of wholesome food is at all times sufficient for that purpose. This by giving a tone to the stomach invigorates the whole system, while the gentle fever created by digestion adds considerably to the natural and ordinary heat of the body, and thus renders it less sensible of the cold.

2. It is equally absurd to suppose that spirituous liquors lessen the effects of heat upon the body. So far from it, they rather encrease them. They add an internal heat to the external heat of the Sun; they dispose to fevers and inflammations of the most dangerous kind; they produce preternatural sweats which weaken, instead of a uniform and gentle perspiration which exhilarates the body. Half the diseases which are said to be produced by warm weather, I am perswaded are produced by the spirits which are swallowed to lessen its effects upon the system.

3. I maintajn with equal confidence, that spirituous liquors do not lessen the effects of hard labour upon the body. Look at the horse—with every muscle of his body swelled from morning 'till night in the plough or the team, does he make signs for spirits to enable him to cleave the earth, or to climb a hill? — No.—He requires nothing but cool water and substancial food. There is neither strength nor nourishment in spirituous liquors. If they produce vigour in labour, it is of a transient nature, and is always succeeded with a sene of weaknes and fatigue. These facts are founded in observation; for I have repeatedly seen those men perform the greatest exploits in work both as their degrees and duration, who never tasted spirituous liquors.

But are there no conditions of the human body in which spirituous liquors are required? Yes, there are; 1st. In thoſe cases where the body has been exhausted by any causes, and faintines, or a stoppage in the circulation of the blood has been produced, the sudden ſtimulus of ſpirits may be neceſſary. In this caſe we comply ſtrictly with the advice of Solomon, who confines the uſe of "ſtrong drink" only to him "that is ready to perish!" And 2dly. When the body has been long expoſed to wet weather, and more eſpecially if cold be joined with it, a moderate quantity of ſpirits is not only proper but highly uſeful to obviate debility, and thus to prevent a fever. I take theſe to be the only two caſes that can occur in which spirituous liquors are innocent or neceſſary.

But if we reject ſpirits from being part of our drinks, what liquors ſhall we ſubſtitute in the room of them? For cuſtom—the experience of all ages and countries, and even nature herſelf all ſeem to demand drinks more grateful and more cordial than ſimple water.

To this I ſhall reply, by recommending in the room of ſpirits in the firſt place,

1. CYDER. This excellent liquor contains a ſmall quantity of ſpirit, but ſo diluted and blunted, by being combined with an acid.

acid and a large quantity of sacharine matter and water, as to be perfectly inoffensive and wholesome. It disagrees only with persons subject to the rheumatism, but it may be rendered inoffensive to such people by extinguishing a red hot iron in it, or by diluting it with water. It is to be lamented that the late frosts in the spring often deprive us of the fruit which affords this liquor. But the effects of these frosts have been in some measure obviated by giving an orchard a north-west exposure, so as to check too early vegetation, and by kindling two or three large fires of brush and straw to windward of the orchard the evening before we expect a night of frost. This last expedient has in many instances within the compass of my knowledge, preserved the fruit of an orchard, to the great joy, and emolument of the ingenious husbandman.

2. BEER is a wholesome liquor compared with spirits. The grain from which it is obtained is not liable, like the apple, to be affected with frost, and therefore it can always be procured at a moderate expence. It abounds with nourishment ---hence we find many of the common people in Great-Britain endure hard labour with no other food than a quart or three pints of this liquour, with a few pounds of bread a day. I have heard with great pleasure of breweries being set up in several of the principal county towns of Pennsylvania, and I esteem it a sign of the progress of our state in wealth and happiness, that a single brewer in Chester county sold above 1000 barrels of beer last year. While I wish to see a law imposing the heaviest taxes on whisky distilleries, I should be glad to see breweries (at least for some years) wholly exempted from taxation.

3. WINE is likewise a wholesome liquor compared with spirits. The low wines of France I believe could be drank at a less expence than spirits in this country. The peasants in France who drink these liquors in large quantities, are a healthy and sober body of people. Wines of all kinds yield by chemical analysis the same principles as cyder, but in different proportions, hence they are both cordial and nourishing. It is remarked that few men ever become *habitual* drunkards upon wine. It derives its relish principally from company, and is seldom like spirituous liquors drank in a chimney corner or in a closet. The effects of wine upon the *temper* are likewise in most cases directly opposite to those that were mentioned of spirituous liquors. It must be a bad heart indeed that is not rendered more cheerful and more generous by a few glasses of wine.

4. VINEGAR and WATER sweetened with sugar or molasses, is the best drink that can be contrived in warm weather. I beg leave to recommend this wholesome mixture to reapers in a particular manner. It is pleasant and cooling. It promotes perspiration, and resists putrefaction. Vinegar and water constituted the only drink of the soldiers of the Roman republic, and it is well known that they marched, and fought in a warm climate, and beneath a load of arms that weighed sixty pounds. Boaz, a wealthy farmer in Palestine, we find treated his reapers with nothing but bread dipped in vinegar. Say not that---spirits have become necessary in harvest from habit and the custom of the country. The custom of swallowing this liquid fire is a bad one, and the habit of it may be broken. Let half a dozen farmers in a neighbourhood combine to allow higher wages to their reapers than are common, and a sufficient quantity of *any* of the liquors I have recommended; and they may soon abolish the practice of giving them spirits. They will in a little while be delighted with the good effects of their association. Their grain will be sooner and more carefully gathered into their barns, and an hundred disagreeable scenes of sickness and contention will be avoided, which always follow in a greater or less degree the use of spirituous liquors. Under this head, I should not neglect to recommend butter-milk and water, or four milk (commonly called bonne-clabber) and water. It will be rendered more grateful by the addition of a little sugar. PUNCH is likewise calculated to lessen the effects of heat, and hard labour upon the body. The spirit in this liquor is blunted by its union with the vegetable acid. Hence it possesses not only the constituent parts, but most of the qualities of cyder, and wine. To render this liquor perfectly innocent and wholesome, it must be drank *weak*--in moderate quantities--and *only* in warm weather.

There are certain classes of people to whom I beg leave to suggest a caution or two upon the use of spirituous liquors.

1. Valitudinarians, especially those who labour under disorders of the stomach and bowels, are very apt to fly to spirits for relief. Let such people be cautious how they repeat this dangerous remedy. I have known many men and women, of excellent characters and principles, who have been betrayed by occasional doses of gin or brandy to ease the choleric, into a love of spirituous liquors, insomuch that they have afterwards fallen sacrifices to their fatal effects. The different preparations of opium are a thousand times more safe and innocent than spirituous liquors in all spasmodic affections of the stomach and bowels. So apprehensive am I of the danger of contracting

contracting a love for spirituous liquors, by accustoming the stomach to their stimulus, that I think the fewer medicines we exhibit in spirituous vehicles the better.

2. Some people from living in countries subject to the intermitting fever, endeavour to fortify themselves against it by two or three glasses of bitters made with spirits every day.—There is great danger of men becoming softs from this practice. Besides, this mode of preventing intermittents is by no means a certain one. A much better security against them is to be found in the Jesuits bark. A tea-spoonful of this excellent medicine, taken every morning during the sickly season, has in many instances preserved whole families in the neighbourhood of rivers and mill-ponds from fevers of all kinds. Those who live in a sickly part of the country, and who cannot procure the bark, or who object to taking it, I would advise to avoid the morning and evening air in the sickly months—to kindle fires in their houses on damp days, and in cool evenings throughout the whole summer, and to put on woollen cloathing about the first week in September. The last part of this direction applies only to the inhabitants of the middle states. These cautions I am persuaded will be more effectual in preventing autumnal fevers than the best preparations that can be made from bitters in spirits.

3. Men who follow professions that require a constant exercise of the mind or body, or perhaps of both, are very apt to seek relief from fatigue in spirituous liquors. To such persons I would beg leave to recommend the use of TEA instead of spirits. Fatigue is occasioned by the obstruction of perspiration. Tea, by restoring perspiration, removes fatigue, and thus invigorates the system. I am no advocate for the general or excessive use of tea.—When drank too strong it is hurtful, especially to the female constitution; but when drank of a moderate degree of strength, and in moderate quantities with sugar and cream or milk, I believe it is in general innocent, and at all times to be preferred to spirituous liquors. One of the most industrious schoolmasters I ever knew, told me that he had been preserved from the love of spirituous liquors by contracting a love for tea in early life. Three or four dishes drank in an afternoon, carried off the fatigue of a whole day's labour in his school. This gentleman lived to be 71 years of age, and afterwards died of an acute disease in the full exercise of all the faculties of his mind.

To every class of my readers, I beg leave to suggest a caution against the use of TODDY. I acknowledge that I have known some men who by limiting its strength constantly by measuring

measuring the spirit and water, and who by drinking it *only* with their *meals*, have drank toddy for many years without suffering in any degree from it; but I have known many more who have been insensibly led from drinking toddy for their constant drink, to take drams in the morning, and have afterwards paid their lives as the price of their folly. I shall select one case from among many that have come within the compass of my knowledge, to shew the ordinary progress of intemprance in the use of spirituous liquors. A gentleman, once of a fair and sober character, in the city of Philadelphia, for many years drank toddy as his constant drink. From this he proceeded to drink grog — after a while nothing would satisfy him but slings, made of equal parts of rum and water, with a little sugar. From slings he advanced to raw rum — and from common rum to Jamaica spirits. Here he rested for a few months; but at last he found even Jamaica spirits were not strong enough to warm his stomach, and he made it a constant practice to throw a table-spoonful of ground pepper into each glass of his spirits, in order (to use his own expressions) “to take off their coldness.” It is hardly necessary to add, that he soon afterwards died a martyr to his intemperance,

I shall conclude what has been said of the effects of spirituous liquors with two observations. — 1. A people corrupted by strong drink cannot long be a *free* people. The rulers of such a community will soon partake of the vices of that mass from which they are secreted, and all our laws and governments will sooner or later bear the same marks of the effects of spirituous liquors which were described formerly upon individuals. I submit it therefore to the consideration of the Legislature of Pennsylvania, whether more laws should not be made to encrease the expence and lessen the consumption of spirituous liquors, and whether some mark of public infamy should not be inflicted by law upon every man convicted before a common magistrate of drunkenness.

The second and last observation I shall offer is of a serious nature. It has been remarked that the Indians have diminished every where in America since their connection with the Europeans. This has been justly ascribed to the Europeans having introduced spirituous liquors among them. Let those men who are every day turning their backs upon all the benefits of cultivated society, to seek habitations in the neighbourhood of Indians, consider how far this wandering mode of life is produced by the same cause which has scattered and annihilated so many Indian tribes. — Long life, and the secure possession of property, in the land of their ancestors, was looked upon

as a blessing among the ancient Jews. —— For a son to mingle his dust with the dust of his father, was to act worthy of his inheritance; and the prospect of this honour often afforded a consolation even in death. —— However exalted my countrymen, your ideas of liberty may be, while you expose yourselves by the use of spirituous liquors to this consequence, of them, you are nothing more than the pioneers, or in more slavish terms, the, “ hewers of wood” of your more industrious neighbours.

If the facts that have been stated, have produced in any of my readers who have suffered from the use of spirituous liquors a resolution to abstain from them hereafter, I must beg leave to inform them that they must leave them off *suddenly* and *entirely*. No man was ever gradually reformed from drinking spirits. He must not only avoid tasting, but even smelling them, until long habits of abstinence have subdued his affection for them. To prevent his feeling any inconveniences from the sudden loss of their stimulus upon his stomach, he should drink plentifully of camomile or of any other bitter tea, or a few glasses of sound old wine every day. I have great pleasure in adding, that I have seen a number of people who have been *effectually* restored to health — to character — — and to usefulness to their families and to society by following this advice.



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